DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 904 CS 205 535

AUTHOR Weaver, David H.; Wilhoit, G. Cleveland.
TITLE News Media Coverage of U.S. Senators in Four Congresses, 1953-1974. Journalism Monographs No. 67.
INSTITUTION Association for Education in Journalism.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 40p.
AVAILABLE FROM AEJ Publications Manager, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455 ($2.50)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Correlation; Journalism; *Legislators; *Media Research; News Media; *News Reporting; *Political Influences; *Political Power; *Predictor Variables; Seniority

ABSTRACT

The Associated Press (AP) coverage of the United States senators in the 83rd, 89th, 91st, and 93rd Congresses was studied to determine the impact of various predictor variables. A path model of these variables was developed, reflecting implicit causal assumptions between visibility (press coverage) and such factors as the size of the senator's home state, seniority in the Senate, the senator's office staff size, committee leadership/prestige, and level of activity (within and outside the Senate). Analyses of all the correlations between these variables showed that senatorial activity was the strongest predictor of AP coverage, especially for Democrats. Only the data for the 89th Congress deviated from this pattern; in that analysis, the size of a senator's staff was the best predictor of coverage. State size was equal to or stronger than activity in predicting the visibility of Republican senators in the 83rd and 93rd Congresses. In general, the variables were better at predicting Republican Senatorial activity and press coverage. The findings suggested that senators in positions of power within the Senate were not necessarily getting the most frequent press coverage. The most active senators usually got the most press coverage, and they tended to come from the most populous states and have the largest office staffs. (RL)

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NUMBER SIXTY-SEVEN

DAVID H. WEAVER
and G. CLEVELAND WILHOIT

News Media Coverage of U.S. Senators in Four Congresses, 1953-1974

APRIL 1980

Published serially since 1966 by the Association for Education in Journalism. An official publication of AEJ.

AEJ

An AEJ Publication

JOURNALISM MONOGRAPHS is one of four official publications of the Association for Education in Journalism: *Journalism Quarterly* (founded in 1924); *The Journalism Educator* (founded in 1946), which continues its affiliation with the American Society of Journalism School Administrators; *Journalism Abstracts* (founded in 1963); and JOURNALISM MONOGRAPHS (founded in 1966).

JOURNALISM MONOGRAPHS was supported for its first two years by a gift from the University of Texas, and until 1979 by the American Association of Schools and Departments of Journalism.

For all four publications, business correspondence should be directed to Prof. Harold Wilson, AEJ Publications Manager, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

All numbers are in print and may be ordered from the Publications Manager, singly or in bulk. Attention, librarians: Numbers 1 through 17 are now on microfilm and may be ordered from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

Monographs appearing here are regularly abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts, America: History and Life* and the *ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.*

Subscription Rates

Subscription rates are $10.00 per year, $10.50 outside the U.S. and Canada.

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Single copies	$2.50	$3.50
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JOURNALISM MONOGRAPHS

NUMBER SIXTY-SEVEN • APRIL 1980

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Published serially at Lexington, Kentucky, by the Association for Education in Journalism. An official publication of the association.

Manuscripts and other editorial correspondence should be addressed to the editor, Prof. Bruce H. Westley, School of Journalism, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, 40506. Business correspondence, including subscriptions, should be directed to AEJ Publications Manager, School of Journalism, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

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M. Gilbert Dunn, Douglas W. Cooper, D. Brock Hornby and David W. Leslie, "Mass Communications Research Guide" (10/19/79).

DAVID H. WEAVER and G. CLEVELAND WILHOIT

News Media Coverage of U.S. Senators in Four Congresses, 1953-1974

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DAVID H. WEAVER and G. CLEVELAND WILHOIT are both on the journalism faculty at Indiana University, Dr. Wilhoit as professor and Dr. Weaver as associate professor and director of the Bureau of Media Research. They thank Professors Phillip Tichenor, Jeff Fishel, Leroy Rieselbach, Sharon Dunwoody and Paul Hagner for their theoretical and methodological contributions, and graduate students Brian Werth and Stephen Sellers for their help in collecting and analyzing the data. From their master's theses Mary Ann Wood and Joseph W. Ward generously provided data on coverage of the 89th Congress by the Eastern and Western prestige newspapers. Constance Carter of the Library of Congress also provided valuable assistance in locating related studies.

Dramatic growth in the power of the executive branch in the American political system during the last several decades has led to much concern about the communication problems of the legislative branch. The Watergate scandal may have severely weakened the power of the presidency and heightened that of Congress, but the concern about Congressional communication is still great.

Many legislators and other analysts see press coverage of Congress as "occasional, haphazard, and unbalanced."[1] They argue that such unsystematic public information—in contrast to more direct and thorough media concentration on the executive branch—contributes to widespread ignorance about the workings of Congress and to sagging credibility in the eyes of constituents.[2] Rieselbach, a political scientist specializing in legislative behavior, argues that additional press coverage of Congress is essential to increasing the accountability of Congress.[3]

These problems of communication were among the major concerns of the recent U.S. Commission on the Operation of the Senate. A major recommendation of the commission was that the U.S. Senate should organize its public communication into a central staff responsibility, coordinating the information efforts of senators and committees working on priority issues, arranging news conferences regularly and establishing a press briefing room under Senate control.[4]

In contrast, some scholars see the Senate as having taken much greater advantage of mass media coverage than has the House of Representatives or the judicial branch. Polsby argues that the development of extensive national press coverage in recent decades appears to have had a profound effect on the Senate. He says the national media, in part, permit a new breed of senators to build a national constituency, contributing greatly to a decentralized power structure in the Senate.[5] Robinson finds that network television covers the Senate much more frequently than it reports House activ-

ity, conferring both stature and Presidential potential on senators.[6]

Blanchard's study of Congressional correspondents found reporters agreeing that the Senate was given greater press attention than the House.[7] Concluding that media preoccupation with the Senate was not necessarily undesirable, Blanchard agreed with Polsby that the patterns of national press coverage of the Senate are consistent with the emergence of the Senate as a "great forum, an echo chamber, a publicity machine."[8] Polsby sees the Senate-press relationship as functioning to incubate policy innovations through "great debates" and the "hidden hand of self-promotion" of individual senators.[9]

These arguments point to the need for a firmer idea of the actual patterns of Senate news coverage. What factors determine which senators are visible and which suffer relative media obscurity?

The present research uses unobtrusive documentary data, primarily, to study post-World War II patterns of Senate news in major media, regional and national. The central questions guiding the work are these: To what extent do the institutional-structural aspects of the Senate, such as seniority, committee assignment and senatorial staff size, affect the news potential of individual senators? Do institutional factors create an opportunity structure from which certain senators may gain greater publicity for their activities than their less fortunate colleagues? Or, do journalists, as they often assert, merely seek out senators who are active or who have something important to say, without regard to their institutional position within the Senate?

Theoretical Perspective: Congress and the Press

Much of the classic work on Congress, especially Matthews' widely quoted research on the Senate,[10] emphasized the formal and informal institutional aspects of the federal legislature—seniority, committee structure, norms and folkways—in explaining legislative organization and behavior. The more recent work on Congress places a much greater emphasis upon the conscious, goal-directed strategies of individual members and less upon behavior which is in some way shaped by unwritten norms, role expectations or institutionalized behavior patterns. Polsby, for example, argues that the evidence of an inner-club—a conformist, powerful, controlling

group of senators—is slim, and that power is much more diffuse than an inner club argument would suggest. At least, he says, the negative powers to stall, amend, alter or block legislation are widely dispersed, and that Senate division of labor tends to be *ad hoc*. Senators are just as likely to assume roles that fit their individual self-interests as to accept roles dictated by institutional forces beyond their control.[11]

Other analyses of power in the Senate seem to support Polsby's view. Ripley found Senate power to be diffuse, with individual senators having substantial bargaining leverage relative to party leaders.[12] Rieselbach also argues that Congress is decentralized, with power shared widely, but existing in "multiple centers of influence" not equally accessible to all senators.[13]

To what extent is the dispersion of authority in the Senate reflected in the mass media? Is press coverage dominated by the Senate shift toward decentralization of power, with individual senators cultivating a national constituency for "independent advocacy" through media publicity,[14] or do structural factors of Senate organization prevail in Senate news?

The norms, values and constraints on the roughly 300 journalists regularly reporting on Congress[15] obviously have some effect on Senate news, but our purpose in this study is to examine how much impact individual senators' positions and activities have on the frequency of news coverage about them in one major U. S. wire service, the Associated Press, and in selected other media of national and regional importance.

Although many reporters who spend most of their time in Congress see themselves as rather independent adversaries of government officials and as relatively immune to the power and activity of legislators.[16] Miller's research on reporters in Congress, consisting of extensive interviews with reporters, legislators and committee and personal legislative staffs, suggests they are just as often collaborators in the news as they are adversaries.[17] In accepting and providing tips and leads, in willingness to float "trial balloons" and accept leaks and in various arrangements of quid pro quo, reporters and Congressmen are often tacit, if not intentional, partners in the news. Indeed, Matthews' earlier work on the Senate suggested much the same thing. He found reporters and senators engaged in an open exchange: "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."[18]

Matthews also suggested that the organizational structure of the Senate was very important in determining Senate news. He concluded that seniority, committee assignment, size of state represented, ideology, security of Senate seat as well as senatorial activity, were related to a senator's contact with reporters and subsequent news coverage.[19] Although Matthews did mention the level of activity of senators as an important determinant of news coverage, he seemed to emphasize the positions held by senators in the complex organizational structure of the Senate as more important in gaining news coverage than their individual activities (bill introduced, speeches given, etc.).

Some of our earlier studies of Senate news in the news magazines, newspapers, and some specialized media have supported the importance of the organizational variables of committee assignment, seniority and personal staff size in the 89th, 91st and 93rd Congresses as predictors of individual senators' visibility in the various media.[20] But our interviews with several Washington correspondents and our own experiences as journalists and journalism educators prompted us to add a measure of individual senatorial activity to test the notion that those senators who are doing the most and have something to say frequently are the ones who get the most news coverage. As one veteran Associated Press reporter said, "It's an inevitable fact of life, the way we operate with limited staff . . . , that the more speeches, press releases and other activities a senator turns out, the more coverage we give him."[21]

Other more systematic studies bear out the importance of individual activity for press coverage. In his study of 50 Wisconsin state officials and 21 statehouse correspondents, Dunn finds that those public officials who desire press coverage employ a variety of means of getting it, including press releases (most commonly used), meetings and speeches, press conferences and press briefings.[22]

And Sigal, in his study of reporters and officials in Washington, concludes that of all the facilities that officials routinely provide and reporters routinely rely on, "no others compare with the handout and the press conference in their impact on the news."[23] Sigal further points out that with relatively fewer correspondents from the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* assigned to the Capitol Hill beat than in earlier times, "legislators in pivotal positions in Congress have become more adept at disseminating information to

the press, releasing reports on Saturday for Sunday papers, issuing press releases, and, in general, making themselves available to reporters."[14]

The present work extends our research to a Republican-dominated Congress—the 83rd, which convened in 1953-54. In addition to the 83rd Congress, we have added a major media source to the content analysis, the Associated Press national trunk wire, for all four Congresses to control for variations in media characteristics across Congresses.

A Model of Senatorial Press Coverage

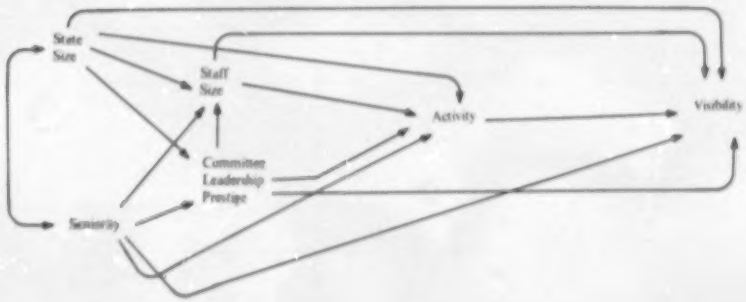
Considering the various studies of legislators and the press cited above, and our own earlier studies of news coverage of the Senate, we focused on five predictors of Senatorial news coverage in this present study: size of state represented, seniority, size of a senator's staff, committee leadership prestige (a combination of committee desirability and committee leadership), and amount of activity of an individual senator (both on and off the floor).

Based on our own thinking and previous studies of Senate news coverage, as well as our desire to understand how these predictors are related to each other, we constructed the model in Figure 1.

A number of causal assumptions are implicitly in this model, assumptions about the direction of causation and, in some cases, about magnitude and sign:

1) We are not assuming that state size causes seniority, or vice versa. The arrow connecting state size and seniority indicates that we do intent to examine the corre-

FIGURE 1
The Path Model



lation between these two factors without assuming any kind of causal relationship.

2) The size of a senator's state influences the size of his staff. This assumption is based on the fact that the larger the state represented, the bigger the clerk-hire budget of that senatorial office.[25] The budget for the largest state, however, is only about twice as large as that for one smallest state ($1,021,167 vs. $508,221 in 1979).

3) The size of a senator's state influences his power position in the Senate.

4) The size of a senator's state influences level of activity within and outside the Senate. This assumption is based on the finding that senators from larger, more urban states appear to be more active in Senate proceedings than their colleagues from smaller states.[26]

5) The size of a senator's state influences frequency of news coverage. This assumption is based on Matthews' suggestion that senators from larger states have more contact with reporters and, consequently, receive more news coverage.[27]

6) Seniority influences size of staff. We are not sure what the relationship is, but it is more plausible that seniority influences staff size than vice versa.

7) Seniority influences power position in the Senate. Majority and minority leaders of the most prestigious and powerful committees in the Senate tend to be older, more experienced senators.

8) Seniority influences level of activity within and outside the Senate. This seems more plausible than the opposite.

9) Seniority influences frequency of news coverage. This assumption is based on Matthews' suggestion that more senior senators have more frequent contact with reporters and thus more frequent news coverage.[28]

10) A senator's staff size influences level of activity within and outside the Senate. We are assuming that personal staffs are important in helping a senator serve the needs of constituents, in researching and writing proposed legislation and in dealing with the press.

11) Staff size influences frequency of news coverage. This assumption is based on our own interviews with legislative correspondents as well as on studies by Dunn and Sigal.[29]

12) A senator's committee leadership prestige influences size of staff. This seems more plausible than vice versa.

13) Committee leadership prestige influences level of activity within and outside the Senate. While we realize that level of activity can influence power position in the Senate, we assume here that a senator's position has more influence on level of activity than vice versa.

14) Committee leadership prestige influences frequency of news coverage. This assumption is based on Matthews' suggestion that committee assignment was related to a senator's contact with reporters and subsequent news coverage[30] and on the observations of some reporters that committees are the fulcrum of press contact with Congress.[31]

15) The level of a senator's activity (both within and outside the Senate) influences frequency of news coverage. This assumption is based on several studies already cited, including those by Dunn and Sigal, as well as our own interviews with legislative correspondents and other journalists.[32]

In addition to mapping the relationships outlined in Figure 1 between these five predictors and frequency of news coverage, we were also interested in looking at the relative predictive power of the institutional variables (state size, staff size, seniority, committee leadership prestige) versus the activity variable to see if the more powerful senior senators from larger states with larger staffs get more frequent news coverage regardless of their level of activity, or if those senators who are more active can obtain more frequent news coverage even if they are not powerful within the Senate or do not have the support of a large state and a large staff.

For each Congress included in this study (88rd, 89th, 91st, 93rd), we tested our model for all senators combined and then for Democrats and Republicans separately. This control for political party affiliation recognizes the importance of political parties in the power structure of the Senate and the possibility that the partisan positions of both senators and reporters may have an influence on the frequency of their interaction with one another.

Polsby emphasizes the importance of political party affiliation in the power structure of the Senate when he writes, "The power and the responsibility to get things done—especially big things—is predominantly in the hands of party leaders."[33] He also argues that Republicans and Democrats allocate their powers differently, with the Republicans spreading their formal powers more thinly than Democrats, who concentrate more power in the floor leader.[34] To the extent that Senate power does have an influence on frequency of press coverage, differences in allocation of power should result in differences in frequency of press coverage.

Matthews argued that political positions were also important in determining how often various senators interacted with various "top" news reporters. He hypothesized that senators tend to see top reporters whose political position is similar to their own.[35] Assuming that frequency of contact with a reporter is correlated with frequency of news coverage, this is another argument for analyzing Republican and Democratic senators separately.

Methodology

Predominately unobtrusive data from published documents—*Congressional Quarterly, Congressional Staff Directories* and *Con-*

gressional Record—and the mass media are used in this study of press coverage of the 83rd, 89th, 91st and 93rd Congresses. Seven personal interviews with Congressional correspondents, three with Associated Press reporters in the Senate Press Gallery, two with United Press International reporters, and two with reporters who cover the Senate for Knight-Ridder newspapers, provided supplementary descriptive data.

Independent Variables: Opportunity Structure. Seniority rankings, state population size rankings, number of committee and subcommittee chairmanships (and ranking minority memberships), committee prestige rankings and number of persons on a senator's personal staff (except for the 83rd Congress, for which data were unobtainable) were obtained from standard documents.

Senatorial Activity. Our measure of activity is the number of entries in the *Congressional Record* for each senator in each Congress. Asher has suggested that the *Record* can be used as a "sophisticated" measure of some types of legislative activity.[37] Our intent was to attempt a measure that would extend beyond legislative work to outside activity, such as speeches and public activity of various kinds. The *Record* seems to do that well. We are aware that individual Congressmen do alter the *Record* and that they sometimes may use it cosmetically. It would appear, however, that manipulation of the *Record* is a practice that is common, rather than a characteristic of a particular type of senator.

Extensive review of the *Congressional Record* for a large group of senators from both parties strongly suggests that "irrelevant" entries, such as magazine and newspaper article titles cited but not authored by the senators, are proportional to the total number of entries. Therefore, we decided to use the total number of entries for each senator as a simple measure of "activity" for this research.[38]

Dependent Variable: Media Visibility. Four major universes of media content data and two random samples of news stories are used at various points in time as a measure of press visibility of individual senators. For each Congress, all senators are ranked according to the number of news stories in which they appeared in the various media.

The mass media analyzed here includes magazine, newspaper and Associated Press national wire stories. For the 93rd Congress,

the nightly television newscasts for the ABC, CBS and NBC networks are added to the printed sources in the index.

The names of the U.S. senators are used as coding units, both in the news items coded first-hand and in the major indexes used as secondary sources of visibility data. For each complete news story in which a senator's name appeared, a score of "1" was assigned regardless of multiple references. For the indexes used, each article or story in which a senator's name had been indexed in a particular volume received a score of "1".

The complete universe of articles mentioning U.S. senators in 250 popular periodicals, ranging from *Newsweek* to *Reader's Digest*, are coded for the 89th, 91st and 93rd Congresses. The *Newspaper Index* of articles from the Washington *Post*, New Orleans *Times Picayune*, Chicago *Tribune*, and the Los Angeles *Times*, and *Television Index* of network newscasts are coded for the 93rd Congress.

University Microfilm's daily file of the Associated Press national trunk wire, the major source of Senate news for most American daily newspapers, was searched for all four Congresses.

In addition to these standard sources of visibility data, several random samples of news coverage were used for the 89th Congress from four Western and six Eastern prestige newspapers and the three major news magazines.[39]

The diverse media sources used here provide a reasonably complete and representative index of media of regional and national stature. The major newspapers coded, the networks and some of the magazines maintain their own correspondents in the capital. By including the AP wire service for each Congress, we can control for variations in media characteristics to some extent, and we have the basic pool of Senate stories from which many other media, especially small daily newspapers, draw their news about Congress.

Procedures used by the standard indexes included in this research assured that only substantive material about U.S. senators would be coded. No attempt has been made to classify the visibilty references into news categories, but an examination of a sample of the references from the index suggested that most of the mentions are of a substantive nature.

The three major news magazines were coded by hand for the 89th Congress and the results were compared to those for the *Reader's*

TABLE 1
Intercorrelations Among Media Visibility Scores For All Senators, 89th Congress (N = 96)

	Eastern Press	Western Press	News Magazines	Reader's Guide	Associated Press
Eastern Press	-				
Western Press	.81				
News Magazines	.76	.84	-		
Reader's Guide	.65	.63	.91	-	
Associated Press	.73	.85	.87	.72	-

Guide. A Pearsonian *r* of .91 was obtained. Reasonably high intercorrelations of the visibility rankings for the separate media appeared to justify pooling of the visibility data into a mass media index and using only the Associated Press national trunk wire for the 83rd Congress, the one studied last. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

Level of measurement approached interval scales for both independent and dependent variables in the study. Path analysis with ordinary least squares multiple regression, was used to test the model.[40]

Inter-Media Comparisons. One of the most striking findings for the three Congresses where we analyzed other media besides the Associated Press national trunk wire (the 89th, 91st and 93rd Congresses) was the similarity in relative frequency of news coverage of senators by the various media. Largely the same senators in the 89th Congress received frequent coverage (and infrequent coverage) from the Associated Press, the three leading news magazines, and Eastern and Western prestige newspapers (Table 1).

Likewise, in the 91st Congress, the correlation between *Reader's Guide* and Associated Press visibility scores was .65, again suggesting that those senators who received frequent coverage by the Associated Press also received frequent coverage in the publications indexed by the *Reader's Guide* (and vice versa).

In the 93rd Congress, the same pattern emerges, especially for the Associated Press, the Newspaper Index and the Television Index, where all the correlations were above .80 (Table 2).

TABLE 2
Intercorrelations Among Media Visibility Scores For All Senators, 93rd Congress (N = 99)

	Reader's Guide	TV Index	Newspaper Index	Associated Press
Reader's Guide	-			
Television Index	.59	-		
Newspaper Index	.73	.91	-	
Associated Press	.70	.82	.88	-

These findings suggest that in covering the U. S. Senate, there is remarkable agreement among the media in "status conferral." Senators frequently covered by one medium are frequently covered by others. Senators ignored by one medium are ignored by others.

Findings

83rd Congress: 1953-54. As the Korean War armistice talks dragged on at Panmunjom in early 1953, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis.) dominated the news from the 83rd Congress. McCarthy's Government Operations Committee's investigations of the army and U.S. overseas information programs in 1953 and the Senate's move to censure him in 1954 resulted in McCarthy's being the most visible senator in the 83rd Congress.

The press visibility patterns for the top ten senators of the 83rd Congress reflected the razor-thin margin held by the Republicans as the majority party, the last time they have organized the Senate in contemporary political history. Five Republicans, four Democrats and the only Independent in the Senate were among the ten most visible.

William Knowland (R.-Calif.), who was elected majority leader in August, 1953, after the death of Robert A. Taft (R-Ohio), was the second most visible member. His leadership on the Senate floor concerning President Eisenhower's omnibus farm bill to institute flexible price supports and the Administration's legislation to broaden Social Security coverage gave Knowland a high visibility in the AP wire.

A political maverick, Wayne Morse (I-Ore.), who had shed his Republican label to campaign for Adlai Stevenson in 1952, received substantial wire service coverage, owing to his role in the successful Senate filibuster against granting states control of natural resources in their seaward "tidelands" and outspoken criticism of the leadership of both parties.

Among Democrats, Estes Kefauver (D-Tenn.), a key party leader who had been a contender for the presidential nomination in 1952, led the field in press visibility. Close behind were Hubert Humphrey (D-Minn.), a highly active Senate liberal who opposed the Eisenhower Administration's attempt to revise the Taft-Hartley labor law, and Senate minority leader Lyndon B. Johnson (D-Tex.). (See Table 3.)

TABLE 3
Number of AP Appearances of Each Senator
83rd Congress (1953-54)

Name	Appearances	Name	Appearances
McCarthy, J. (R-Wis.)	358	George, W. (D-Ga.)	58
Knowland, W. (R-Cal.)	226	Wiley, A. (R-Wis.)	57
Morse, W. (I-Ore.)	175	Dirksen, E. (R-Ill.)	54
Kefauver, E. (D-Tenn.)	126	Russell, R. (D-Ga.)	54
Humphrey, H. (D-Minn.)	116	Mundt, K. (R-S.D.)	51
Johnson, L. (D-Tex.)	113	Millikin, E. (R-Colo.)	50
Langer, W. (R-N.D.)	113	Murray, J. (D-Mont.)	50
Ferguson, H. (R-Mich.)	108	Johnston, O. (D-S.C.)	49
Capehart, H. (R-Ind.)	102	Jenner, W. (R-Ind.)	48
Anderson, C. (D-N.M.)	98	Monroney, A. (D-Okla.)	47
Bricker, J. (R-Ohio)	95	Cordon, G. (R-Ore.)	46
Douglas, P. (D-Ill.)	95	Johnson, E. (D-Colo.)	46
Ives, I. (R-N.Y.)	84	Hendrickson, R. (R-N.J.)	45
Lehman, H. (D-N.Y.)	83	Neely, M. (D-W.V.)	44
Cooper, J. (R-Ky.)	77	Young, M. (R-N.D.)	44
Byrd, H. (D-Va.)	74	McClellan, J. (D-Ark.)	43
Sparkman, J. (D-Ala.)	71	Ellender, A. (D-La.)	42
Saltonstall, L. (R-Mass.)	67	Jackson, H. (D-Wash.)	41
Gore, A. (D-Tenn.)	61	Kerr, R. (D-Okla.)	41
Hennings, T. Jr. (D-Mo.)	61	Eastland, J. (D-Miss.)	39
Smith, H.A. (R-N.J.)	60	Fulbright, J.W. (D-Ark.)	39
Smith, M. (R-Maine)	60	Williams, J. (R-Del.)	39
Aiken, G. (R-Vt.)	59	Kuchel, T. (R-Cal.)	37

Magnuson, W. (D-Wash.)	36	Goldwater, B. (R-Ariz.)	25
Hickenlooper, B. (R-Iowa)	34	Watkins, A. (R-Utah)	24
Chavez, D. (D-N.M.)	33	Clements, E. (D-Ky.)	23
Hill, L. (D-Ala.)	33	Hayden, C. (D-Ariz.)	23
Barrett, F. (R-Wyo.)	32	Malone, G. (R-Nev.)	22
Holland, S. (D-Fla.)	32	Daniel, P. (D-Tex.)	21
Long, R. (D-La.)	32	Welker, H. (R-Idaho)	21
Green, T. (R-R.I.)	31	Pastore, J. (D-R.I.)	20
Potter, C. (R-Mich.)	31	Smathers, G. (D-Fla.)	20
Symington, S. (D-Mo.)	31	Robertson, A.W. (D-Va.)	18
Carlson, F. (R-Kan.)	29	Thye, E. (R-Minn.)	17
Gillette, G. (D-Iowa)	29	Mansfield, M. (D-Mont.)	15
Case, F. (R-S.D.)	28	Duff, J. (R-Pa.)	14
Kilgore, H. (D-W.Va.)	28	Payne, F. (R-Maine)	13
Butler, J. (R-Md.)	27	Purtell, W. (R-Conn.)	13
Kennedy, J. (D-Mass.)	27	Bennett, W. (R-Utah)	12
Schoeppel, A. (R-Kan.)	27	Bush, P. (R-Conn.)	12
Dworshak, H. (R-Idaho)	26	Stennis, J. (D-Miss.)	12
Flanders, R. (R-Vt.)	26	Martin, E. (R-Pa.)	8
Frear, J.A. (D-Del.)	25	Beall, J.G. (R-Md.)	6

As the majority party, Republicans got about 53 percent of the wire service coverage of the Senate during this period. Of the four Congresses looked at in this series of studies, the parity of coverage between the parties is greater for the 83rd Congress than for any of the Democratically-controlled Congresses in the mid-sixties and early seventies. As the minority party in the 1970s, the Republicans slipped to less than one-third of the total AP coverage, even though their numbers in the Senate were increasing.

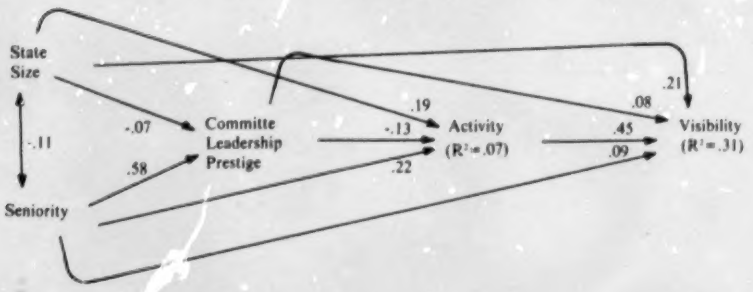
In the 83rd Congress, the median Democrat was slightly more visible (41.3 mentions) than his Republican colleague (34.5). In the later Congresses, the median Democratic senator also received more mentions in the Associated Press than the median Republican, except for the 89th Congress where the median Republican was slightly more visible (25.5 mentions) than the median Democratic senator (21.3 mentions).

Senators in the 83rd Congress who were more senior and represented more populous states tended to be somewhat more active than the more junior senators from less populous states, and increased activity was associated with more frequent coverage by the Associated Press. This pattern generally held true for both Dem-

ocrats and Republicans, although seniority was not associated with activity for Democrats. Committee leadership positions (weighted for the prestige of the committee) were the strongest predictors of activity for Republicans, whereas population of state represented was the best predictor of activity for Democrats. (See Figure 2.)

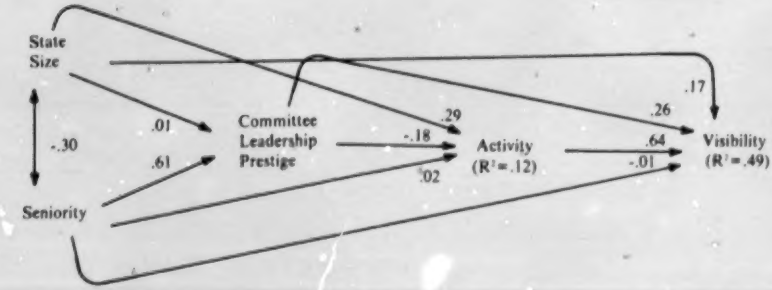
In general, level of activity was a much stronger predictor of Associated Press coverage for Democrats than for Republicans, and was clearly the strongest predictor of AP coverage for all senators combined. And the proportion of variance in activity accounted for by the opportunity structure variables was twice as great for Republicans as for Democrats, suggesting that seniority, state size and

FIGURE 2
Path Models for AP Coverage of Senators, 83rd Congress

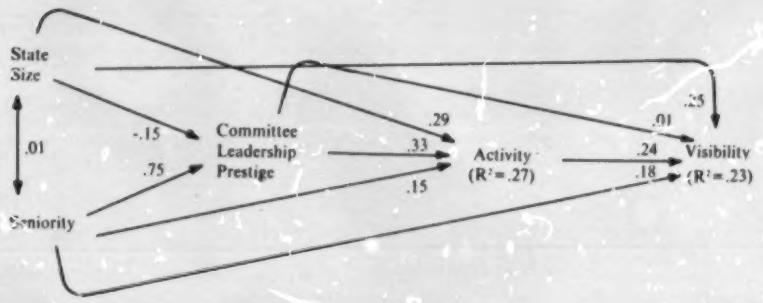


Entire Senate (n = 86)[a]

[a] **Includes one Independent (Morse).**



Democrats (n = 41)



Republicans (n = 44)

NOTE: Staff sizes for the 85th Congress could not be ascertained.

committee leadership positions were not as important for a Democrat's level of activity as for a Republican's. This was even more noticeable in the three later Congresses, where the proportion of variance in the activity measure accounted for by the opportunity structure measures was three to four times greater for Republicans than for Democrats. (See Figures 3, 4 and 5).

Positions of power in the Senate obviously help pave the way for attention in the press, but it is clear from these data that an active senator with few of the trappings of Senate power can also command considerable press coverage.

For example, Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), a former Congressman, was highly visible in the wire service during his first term in the Senate in spite of his non-prestigious assignments to the District of Columbia and Public Works committees. The son of a farmer and champion of the "little man," Gore made news for his opposition to the Dixon-Yates bill, which would have introduced private electrical power production in competition with the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Although receiving much of their coverage from tough re-election bids, John Sherman Cooper (R-Ky.) and Paul Douglas (D-Ill.), both first term senators, also illustrate the power of events and activity in gaining press visibility. Cooper received coverage for some key floor votes against large Republican majorities. Douglas, an outspoken and highly active liberal with few of the formal trappings

of Senate power, gained coverage for his fight against the Eisenhower Administration's attempt to revise the Taft-Hartley law.

In summary, Senate leadership positions, combined with seniority and state size, always command press attention. Being a member of the majority party which organizes the Senate, commanding all the committee chairs, is a publicity advantage. In fact, of the four Congresses studied here, only when the Republicans controlled the Senate for the last time in the 83rd Congress have they been able to command slightly better than parity coverage over the Democrats. But the push and pull of events and individual senators' activity enable almost any senator who wishes national publicity to obtain it.

89th Congress: 1965-66. At the height of his success in getting Great Society legislation, President Lyndon B. Johnson predicted historians would judge the 89th Congress as the best in U.S. history. Landmark social legislation—medical care for the aged, voting rights, immigration reform, a broad housing subsidy for low income families and Appalachian regional development—led some observers to compare the 89th Congress to the first two years of Roosevelt's New Deal. Escalating involvement in the Vietnam War and growing inflation captured much attention during the second session, but additional Great Society legislation was passed.[41]

The top newsmakers in the Associated Press for the 89th Congress were Robert Kennedy, Everett Dirksen (minority leader), Mike Mansfield (majority leader), Jacob Javits, J. William Fulbright and Thomas Dodd, a predominately Democratic field. (See Table 4.) Some fairly clear party differences in the patterns of news coverage are evident in this Congress.[42]

TABLE 4
Number of AP Appearances of Senators, 89th Congress (1965-66)

Name	Appearances	Name	Appearances
Dirksen, E. (R-Ill.)	217	Kennedy, E.M. (D-Mass.)	66
Kennedy, R.F. (D-N.Y.)	209	Tower, J.G. (R-Tex.)	57
Mansfield, M. (D-Mont.)	121	Fulbright, J. (D-Ark.)	57
Javits, J.K. (R-N.Y.)	120	Morse, W. (D-Ore.)	56
Douglas, P.H. (D-Ill.)	87	Long, R.B. (D-La.)	54
Dodd, T.J. (D-Conn.)	67	Cooper, J.S. (R-Ky.)	54

Williams, J.J. (R-Del.)	51	Ervin, S. (D-N.C.)	21
Saltonstall, L. (R-Mass.)	47	Jordan, L.B. (R-Idaho)	20
Morton, T.B. (R-Ky.)	47	Gore, A. (D-Tenn.)	18
Scott, H. (R-Pa.)	45	Hartke, V. (D-Ind.)	17
Clark, J.S. (D-Pa.)	45	Hayden, C. (D-Ariz.)	17
Thurmond, S. (R-S.C.)	43	Boggs, J.C. (D-Del.)	17
Stennis, J. (D-Miss.)	43	Muskie, E.S. (D-Maine)	17
Curtis, C.T. (R-Neb.)	42	Symington, S. (D-Mo.)	16
Russell, R.B. (D-Ga.)	39	Allott, G. (R-Colo.)	16
McCarthy, E.J. (D-Minn.)	39	McIntyre, T.J. (D-N.H.)	15
Bayh, B. (D-Ind.)	39	Dominick, P. (R-Colo.)	14
Kuchel, T.H. (R-Calif.)	38	Holland, S.L. (D-Fla.)	14
Jordan, B.E. (D-N.C.)	38	Prouty, W.L. (R-Vt.)	14
Case, C.P. (R-N.J.)	38	Smathers, G.A. (D-Fla.)	14
Eastland, J. (D-Miss.)	36	Simpson, M.L. (R-Wyo.)	13
Sparkman, J. (D-Ala.)	34	Fannin, P.J. (R-Ariz.)	13
Ellender, A. (D-La.)	32	Jackson, H.M. (D-Wash.)	13
Mundt, K.E. (R-S.D.)	31	Bartlett, E. (D-Alaska)	12
Tydings, J.D. (D-Md.)	31	Church, F. (D-Idaho)	12
McClellan, J. (D-Ark.)	29	Talmadge, H.E. (D-Ga.)	12
Metcalf, L. (D-Mont.)	29	Young, S.M. (D-Ohio)	11
Mondale, W.F. (D-Minn.)	29	Magnuson, W. (D-Wash.)	11
Monroney, A.S. (D-Okla.)	29	Brewster, D. (D-Md.)	11
Yarborough, R. (D-Tex.)	28	Cotton, N. (R-N.H.)	10
Pearson, J.B. (R-Kan.)	28	Young, M.R. (R-N.D.)	10
Miller, J. (R-Iowa)	28	Hill, L. (D-Ala.)	9
Ribicoff, A. (D-Conn.)	27	Long, E.V. (D-Mo.)	9
Smith, M.C. (R-Maine)	26	Burdick, Q. (D-N.D.)	8
Proxmire, W. (D-Wis.)	26	Carlson, F. (R-Kan.)	8
Harris, F. (D-Okla.)	26	Fong, H.L. (R-Hawaii)	8
Hickenlooper, B. (R-Iowa)	25	Moss, F.E. (D-Utah)	8
Randolph, J. (D-W.Va.)	25	Nelson, G. (D-Wis.)	8
Hart, P.A. (D-Mich.)	24	Williams, H.A. (D-N.J.)	7
Bennett, W. (R-Utah)	24	McGee, G.W. (D-Wyo.)	7
Hruska, R.L. (R-Neb.)	23	Cannon, H.W. (D-Nev.)	7
Lausche, F.J. (D-Ohio)	22	Bible, A. (D-Nev.)	5
Murphy, G. (R-Calif.)	22	Gruening, E. (D-Alaska)	5
Neuberger, M. (D-Ore.)	22	Inouye, D.K. (D-Hawaii)	5
Pastore, J.O. (D-R.I.)	21	McGovern, G. (D-S.D.)	5
Pell, C. (D-R.I.)	21	Montoya, J.M. (D-N.M.)	5
Aiken, G.D. (R-Vt.)	21	Byrd, R.C. (D-W.Va.)	3
Bass, R. (D-Tenn.)	21		

Of the opportunity structure factors, state size operating through size of personal senatorial staff was important in the AP visibility of

senators of both parties, but it was much more important for Republicans than for Democrats. (See Figure 3.) State size had a moderate, direct effect on Democratic visibility, just the reverse of the direct, negative effect on Republican news coverage.

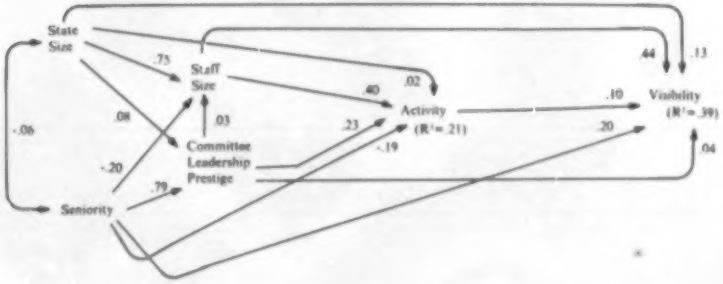
But the primary finding illustrated in Figure 3 is that several opportunity structure measures, especially size of a senator's staff, were better predictors of frequency of Associate Press coverage than was level of activity of an individual senator. Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 reveal that the 89th Congress is the only one of the four we studied where this is true. In all three other Congresses, for all senators combined, activity was clearly the dominant predictor of frequency of AP wire service coverage.

Although we cannot be sure, we suspect that the rapid growth in size of senators' staffs between the 83rd Congress (1953-54) and the 89th Congress (1965-66) contributed greatly to the increase in importance of staff size and the decrease in importance of activity in the 89th Congress. In the two later Congresses, staff size had most of its impact on AP coverage through activity, rather than directly as in the 89th Congress. This suggests to us that AP reporters in the 89th Congress were giving coverage to various senators largely on the basis of the volume of material being churned out by staffs (press releases, reports, etc.), but that in later congresses the reporters were more careful to cover what the senators themselves were doing (or senators' staffs were more efficient at getting activities inserted into the *Congressional Record*, or both).

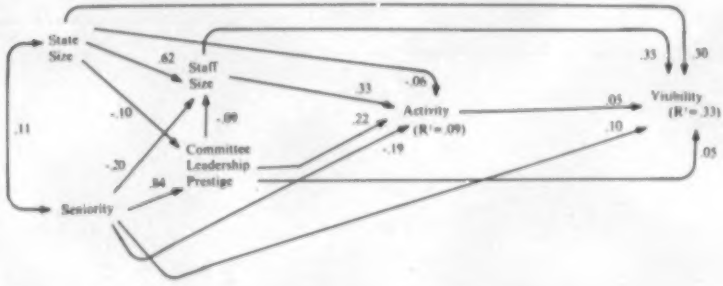
As in the 83rd Congress, opportunity structure and activity are more strongly correlated for Republicans than for Democrats, suggesting that the more powerful Republican senators tend to be more active, whereas activity has little or no relationship to Senate power for Democratic senators.

91st Congress, 1969-70. The Democratic majority was substantially smaller in the 91st Congress than in the two previous Congresses, but, with a Republican President, legislative output during the first session was the lowest in 36 years. The intense Congressional debate about Vietnam subsided, and a compromise was reached on interim funding of the supersonic transport plane. A tax reform measure, extension of voting rights in national elections to 18-year-olds and the establishment of major new federal agencies,

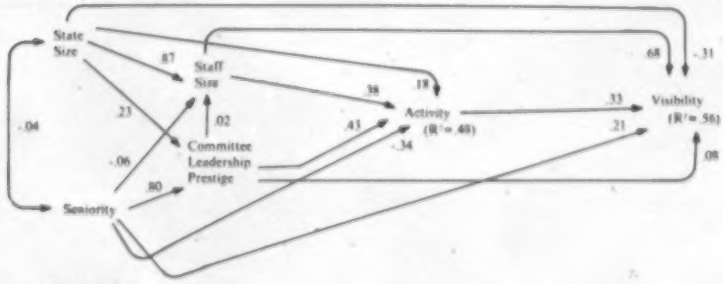
FIGURE 3
Path Models for AP Coverage of Senators, 89th Congress



Entire Senate (n = 96)



Democrats (n = 64)



Republicans (n = 32)

such as the Environmental Protection Agency, were the major domestic actions of the 91st Congress.[43]

For the first time since World War II, the Senate attempted to limit the President's authority in foreign policy and military involvement, and the Tonkin Gulf resolution was appealed.[44] President Richard M. Nixon was extremely critical of the 91st Congress, especially the Senate, saying it "had seemingly lost the capacity to decide and the will to act."[45]

The deaths of Everett Dirksen, Republican minority leader, and Robert Kennedy changed the list of most visible senators during the 91st Congress. Mike Mansfield, Edward M. Kennedy, Hugh Scott, George McGovern, and Edmund Muskie headed the list of newsmakers, closely followed by Charles Goodell, a Republican freshman from New York, and J. William Fulbright. As in the other Congresses we studied, the preponderance of top-ranking senators were Democrats. (See Table 5.)

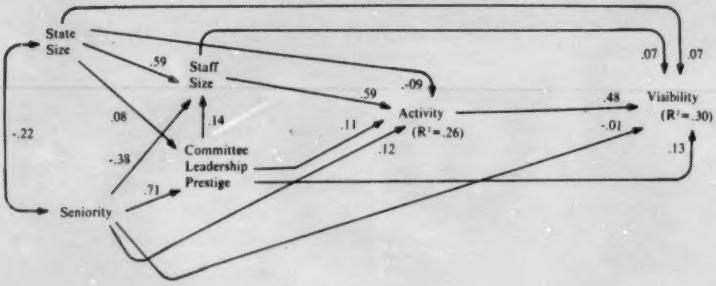
TABLE 5
Number of AP Appearances of Senators, 91st Congress (1969-70)

Name	Appearances	Name	Appearances
Mansfield, M. (D-Mont.)	335	Ervin, S. (D N.C.)	105
Kennedy, E. (D-Mass.)	330	Eastland, J. (D-Miss.)	102
Scott, H. (R-Pa.)	269	Goldwater, B. (R-Ariz.)	99
McGovern, G. (D-S.D.)	209	Thurmond, S. (R-S.C.)	96
Muskie, E. (D-Maine)	198	Stennis, J. (D-Miss.)	95
Goodell, C. (R-N.Y.)	185	Long, R. (D-La.)	91
Fulbright, J.W. (D-Ark.)	183	Church, F. (D-Idaho)	89
Bayh, B. (D-Ind.)	172	Gore, A. (D-Tenn.)	89
Griffin, R. (R-Mich.)	140	Hatfield, M.O. (R-Ore.)	89
Hart, P. (D-Mich.)	135	Dole, R. (R-Kan.)	82
Harris, F. (D-Okla.)	131	Dodd, T. (D-Conn.)	81
McCarthy, E. (D-Minn.)	130	Brooke, E. (R-Mass.)	78
Tydings, J. (D-Md.)	125	Yarborough, R. (D-Tex.)	78
Proxmire, W. (D-Wis.)	122	Byrd, R. (D-W.Va.)	70
Javits, J. (R-N.Y.)	120	Jackson, H. (D-Wash.)	70
Hruska, R. (R-Neb.)	118	Percy, C. (R-Ill.)	70
Cooper, J.S. (R-Ky.)	117	Cook, M. (R-Ky.)	66

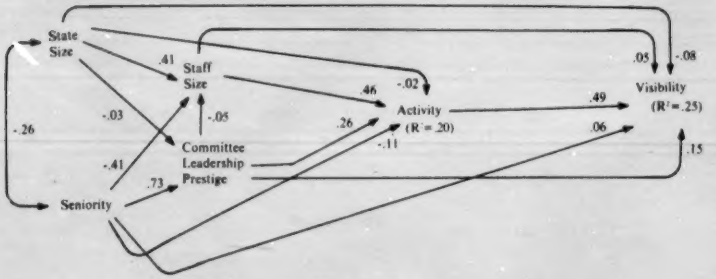
Hartke, V. (D-Ind.)	66	Gurney, E. (R-Fla.)	37
Moss, F. (D-Utah)	66	Hollings, E. (D-S.C.)	37
Aiken, G. (R-Vt.)	65	Magnuson, W. (D-Wash.)	36
Allott, G. (R-Colo.)	64	Curtis, C. (R-Neb.)	33
Hughes, H. (D-Iowa)	61	Allen, J. (D-Ala.)	32
Mondale, W. (D-Minn.)	61	Cannon, H. (D-Nev.)	31
Williams, H. (D-N.J.)	58	Dominick, P. (R-Colo.)	31
Cranston, A. (D-Calif.)	53	Pearson, J. (R-Kan.)	30
Holland, S. (D-Fla.)	53	Mundt, K. (R-S.D.)	28
Tower, J. (R-Tex.)	53	Inouye, D. (D-Hawaii)	27
Baker, H. (R-Tenn.)	52	Packwood, R. (R-Ore.)	27
Russell, R. (D-Ga.)	52	Cotton, N. (R-N.H.)	26
Nelson, G. (D-Wis.)	51	McIntyre, T. (D-N.H.)	26
McGee, G.W. (D-Wyo.)	50	Sparkman, J. (D-Ala.)	26
Pastore, J. (D-R.I.)	49	Pell, C. (D-R.I.)	25
Young, S. (D-Ohio)	49	Eagleton, T. (D-Mo.)	24
Burdick, Q. (D-N.D.)	47	Randolph, J. (D-W.Va.)	24
Byrd, H. (D-Va.)	46	Stevens, T. (R-Alaska)	24
Case, C. (R-N.J.)	46	Anderson, C. (D-N.M.)	22
Symington, S. (D-Mo.)	46	Gravel, M. (D-Alaska)	21
Fong, H. (R-Hawaii)	45	Metcalf, L. (D-Mont.)	21
Fannin, P. (R-Ariz.)	43	Spong, W. (D-Va.)	21
Mathias, C. (R-Md.)	43	Jordan, L. (R-Idaho)	20
Prouty, W. (R-Vt.)	43	Miller, J. (R-Iowa)	20
McClellan, J. (D-Ark.)	42	Bible, A. (D-Nev.)	19
Ribicoff, A. (D-Conn.)	42	Talmadge, H. (D-Ga.)	19
Montoya, J. (D-N.M.)	41	Hansen, C. (R-Wyo.)	18
Bennett, W. (R-Utah)	40	Boggs, J.C. (R-Del.)	16
Saxbe, W. (R-Ohio)	40	Bellmon, H. (R-Okla.)	15
Smith, M.C. (R-Maine)	39	Young, M. (R-N.D.)	14
Ellender, A. (D-La.)	38	Jordan, B.E. (D-N.C.)	10
Schweiker, R. (R-Pa.)	38		

Of the individual factors making up opportunity structure, size of state (working through personal staff size) dropped considerably but remained a factor in visibility for senators of both parties, especially for the Republicans. State size as a direct factor reverses, disappearing as an influence for Democrats and changing from a negative predictor in the 89th Congress to a moderately strong positive factor in the 91st for Republicans. Committee leadership prestige disappears as an influence on Republican visibility and weakens considerably for Democrats. Seniority remains negligible for both parties. (See Figure 4.)

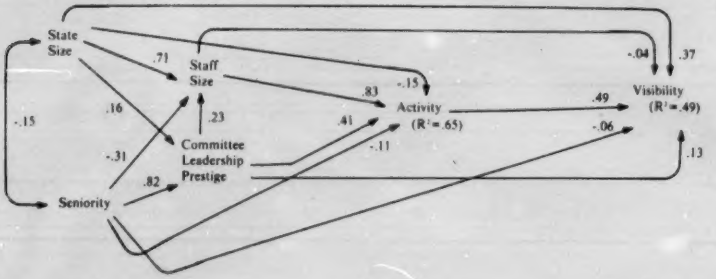
FIGURE 4
Path Models for AP Coverage of Senators, 91st Congress



Entire Senate (n = 97)



Democrats (n = 57)



Republicans (n = 40)

But the main finding in Figure 4 is that individual senatorial activity is the predominant predictor of frequency of Associated Press coverage of individual senators. It is clear, though, that state size (working through staff size) is a major contributor to the level of activity of individual senators, whereas seniority and committee leadership positions have less impact on individual activity, especially for Democrats. This pattern tends to hold for all four Congresses included in this study, suggesting that the external support for a senator (in the form of a more populous state and a larger staff) contributes more to activity and subsequent Associated Press coverage than does power within the Senate (in the form of seniority and prestigious committee leadership assignments).

93rd Congress: 1973-74. Bitter disputes with the executive branch by the 91st Congress were pale by comparison with the clashes with the President in the 93rd Congress, dominated by Watergate. Election campaign reform, passage over the President's veto of a limit to executive war powers, authorization of the Trans-Alaska pipeline, debate about how to deal with the energy shortage and challenges to the seniority system and Congressional reorganization were soon to be swept from the front pages by the all-consuming crisis of Watergate.[46]

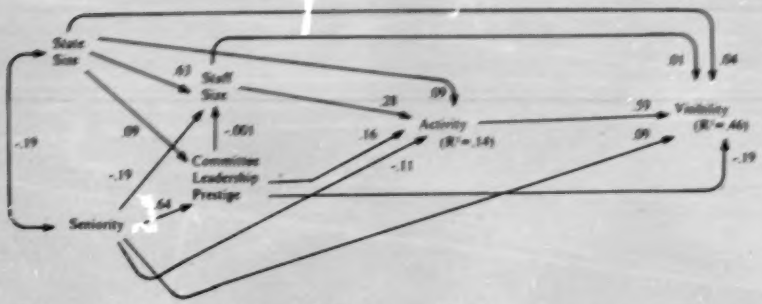
As chairman of the Senate Select Committee, North Carolina Senator Sam J. Ervin rose to the top of the list of most visible senators, along with defense policy critic Henry Jackson. Kennedy, Mansfield, McGovern, Scott, and Humphrey followed, suggesting the strong Democratic dominance of senatorial press coverage in the 93rd Congress. (See Table 6.)

TABLE 6
Number of AP Appearances of Senators, 93rd Congress (1973-74)

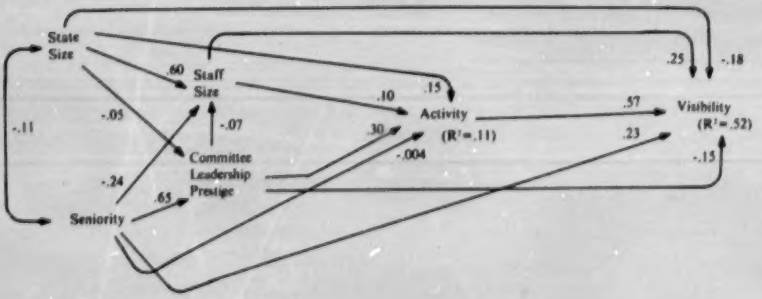
Name	Appearances	Name	Appearances
Kennedy, E. (D-Mass.)	212	Humphrey, H. (D-Minn.)	121
Mansfield, M. (D-Mont.)	203	Muskie, E. (D-Maine)	108
Jackson, H. (D-Wash.)	169	Ervin, S. (D-N.C.)	106
McGovern, G. (D-S.D.)	153	Proxmire, W. (D-Wis.)	103
Scott, H. (R-Pa.)	132	Javits, J. (R-N.Y.)	101

Fulbright, J.W. (D-Ark.)	91	Hatfield, M.O. (R-Ore.)	28
Byrd, R. (D-W.Va.)	84	Stevenson, A. III (D-Ill.)	28
Mondale, W. (D-Minn.)	79	Byrd, H. (I-Va.)	27
Percy, C. (R-Ill.)	73	McGee, G. (D-Wyo.)	26
Tower, J. (R-Tex.)	70	Schweiker, R. (R-Pa.)	26
Church, F. (D-Idaho)	69	Pastore, J.O. (D-R.I.)	25
Goldwater, B. (R-Ariz.)	68	Bellmon, H. (R-Okla.)	25
Eagleton, T. (D-Mo.)	64	Aiken, G. (R-Vt.)	23
Griffin, R. (R-Mich.)	60	Thurmond, S. (R-S.C.)	23
Long, R. (D-La.)	56	Bartlett, D. (R-Okla.)	22
Stennis, J. (D-Miss.)	53	Bennett, W. (R-Utah)	22
Cannon, H. (D-Nev.)	52	Curtis, C. (R-Neb.)	22
Bayh, B. (D-Ind.)	50	Moss, F. (D-Utah)	22
Hughes, H. (D-Iowa)	50	Scott, W. (R-Va.)	22
Dole, R. (R-Kan.)	48	Young, M. (R-N.D.)	22
McClellan, J. (D-Ala.)	44	Clark, D. (D-Iowa)	21
Allen, J.B. (D-Ala.)	44	Biden, J. (D-Del.)	19
Bentsen, L. (D-Tex.)	44	Gurney, E. (R-Fla.)	19
Baker, H. (R-Tenn.)	43	Hollings, E. (D-S.C.)	19
Magnuson, W. (D-Wash.)	43	Taft, R. Jr. (R-Ohio)	19
Brooke, E. (R-Mass.)	42	Fannin, P. (R-Ariz.)	18
Symington, S. (D-Mo.)	41	Beall, J. (R-Md.)	16
Tunney, J. (D-Cal.)	39	Roth, W. (R-Del.)	16
Mathias, C. (R-Md.)	39	Packwood, R. (R-Ore.)	15
Case, C. (R-N.J.)	39	McClure, J. (R-Idaho)	15
Hartke, V. (D-Ind.)	36	McIntyre, T. (D-N.H.)	14
Williams, H. (D-N.J.)	35	Stevens, T. (R-Alaska)	14
Cranston, A. (D-Cal.)	35	Randolph, J. (D-W.Va.)	13
Buckley, J. (R-N.Y.)	35	Hansen, C. (R-Wyo.)	12
Hruska, R. (R-Neb.)	34	Hathaway, W. (D-Maine)	12
Nelson, G. (D-Wis.)	34	Inouye, D. (D-Hawaii)	12
Hart, P. (D-Mich.)	33	Chiles, L. (D-Fla.)	10
Sparkman, J. (D-Ala.)	32	Fong, H. (R-Hawaii)	10
Ribicoff, A. (D-Conn.)	32	Metcalf, L. (D-Mont.)	10
Helms, J. (R-N.C.)	31	Haskell, F. (D-Colo.)	9
Cotton, N. (R-N.H.)	31	Johnston, J. (D-La.)	9
Cook, M. (R-Ky.)	31	Bible, A. (D-Nev.)	8
Pell, C. (D-R.I.)	31	Nunn, S. (D-Ga.)	8
Eastland, J. (D-Miss.)	31	Domenici, P. (R-N.M.)	7
Dominick, P. (R-Colo.)	30	Stafford, R. (R-Vt.)	7
Brock, B. (R-Tenn.)	30	Montoya, J. (D-N.M.)	7
Talmadge, H. (D-Ga.)	30	Pearson, J. (R-Kan.)	6
Weicker, L. (R-Conn.)	29	Huddleston, W. (D-Ky.)	5
Abourezk, J. (D-S.D.)	28	Burdick, O. (D-N.D.)	4
Gravel, M. (D-Alaska)	28		

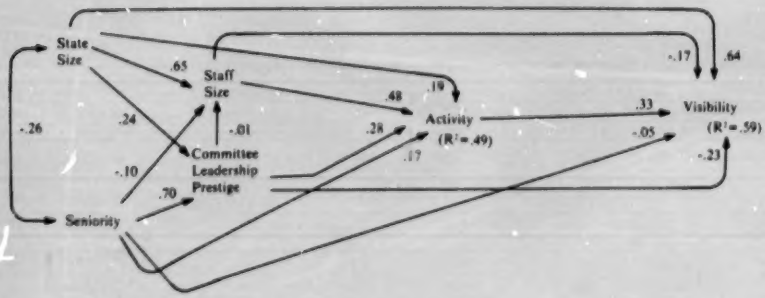
FIGURE 5
Path Models for AP Coverage of Senators, 93rd Congress



Entire Senate (n = 99)



Democrats (n = 56)



Republicans (n = 41)

Once again, activity is the most important predictor of Associated Press coverage of individual senators, for all senators combined and for Democrats. But state size increased dramatically as a direct predictor of AP coverage for Republicans, dwarfing the influence of activity and suggesting that Republican senators from populous states had some special appeal to AP reporters, regardless of their seniority or committee leadership positions. (See Figure 5.) As in the 89th and 91st Congresses, state size and staff size are correlated, making it difficult to sort out their individual contributions to AP visibility.

As in the other three Congresses studied, the opportunity structure measures are much better predictors of senatorial activity for Republicans ($R^2 = .49$) than for Democrats ($R^2 = .11$), suggesting once again that the more powerful Republican senators from the more populous states tend to be the most active, whereas activity among the Democrats is not so tied to external support (state and staff size) and Senate power positions.

Discussion and Conclusions

Associated Press coverage of senators in the four Congresses analyzed in this report suggests that both opportunity structure (external support from state and staff, as well as seniority and committee positions in the Senate) and individual senatorial activity are related to the frequency with which senators are covered by the AP, but individual senatorial activity is generally a much stronger predictor of frequency of AP coverage than are the opportunity structure measures, especially for Democrats.

The only Congress which deviates from this pattern is the 89th, in which the size of a senator's staff was the best predictor of AP coverage—for all senators combined and for Republicans and Democrats analyzed separately. In two other Congresses—the 83rd and the 93rd—state size is equal to or stronger than activity as a predictor of AP coverage for Republicans.

In general, the opportunity structure measures (especially state size) were better predictors of both activity and Associated Press coverage for Repubicans than for Democrats. The most active Re-

publican senators were likely to represent the more populous states, have larger staffs and have considerable seniority and prestigious committee leadership assignments. In contrast, activity among Democratic senators (and subsequent AP coverage) was not nearly as dependent upon state size, staff size, seniority and committee leadership positions.

In all four Congresses included in this study, the external support of a senator (state size and staff size) generally contributed more to activity and subsequent AP coverage than did power within the Senate (seniority and prestigious committee leadership positions). This suggests that senatorial activity (and subsequent press coverage) is generally more dependent upon factors to some extent outside the control of the Senate (such as population of state represented, size of staff and individual senators' initiative) than on factors that the Senate itself is likely to control. This conclusion is further reinforced by the finding in all four Congresses that state size and staff size (what we have termed external support) are generally not related to power with the Senate (as measured by seniority and prestigious committee leadership positions). In fact, in a good many cases, external support and Senate power are *negatively* related, even if not very strongly so.

These findings suggest that senators who are in positions of power within the Senate are not necessarily those who are getting the most frequent wire service coverage. Rather, it is generally those senators who are most active who are getting the most frequent AP coverage, and those senators who are most active tend often to be those who come from the most populous states and have the largest staffs.

Of course, these conclusions hold more for Republicans than for Democrats (whose activity is less dependent on external support or Senate power), but nevertheless they still raise the possibility that the senators being covered most frequently by the Associated Press may be engaged in activities which are not the most important ones in terms of the functioning of the Senate. Although we have data on only the frequency of coverage of individual senators, our findings do suggest that the most senior and powerful senators are not the most active (and heavily covered) senators.

And, as the proportion of total Associated Press Senate coverage

shifts in favor of the Democrats (from 44% in the 83rd Congress to 66% in the 93rd), it is even more likely that the most senior and powerful senators are not the ones most likely to receive the most frequent AP coverage.

In addition, these findings are not unique to the Associated Press. The strong intercorrelations with AP visibility rankings among the various other media analyzed in the 89th, 91st and 93rd Congresses suggest that network television news, the major news magazines and Eastern and Western prestige newspapers all responded in a similar manner to the factors we studied. In fact, the frequency rankings of all media studied in the 89th, 91st and 93rd Congresses were added together into one visibility score for each senator, and these data were used to retest our model of senatorial press coverage. The results were nearly identical to those reported here using only the Associated Press coverage.

In an attempt to provide a wide perspective on press coverage of the Senate, personal interviews were conducted with seven prominent Washington correspondents.[47] Three Associated Press reporters and two United Press International correspondents working out of the Senate Press Gallery, and two reporters for a large newspaper chain, described Senate coverage and reacted to some of the Senate visibility data. When shown a list of highly visible senators, the reporters explained the results in terms of many of the variables used in the study—seniority, committee assignment and activity—but they added a host of individual differences and personality characteristics. Presidential aspirations, an understanding of the press and expertise were often cited.

The same kinds of explanations emerged for low visibility senators, but these senators also evoked a range of other comments: "They don't want to make news;" "They're a bland, faceless lot;" "They're quiet or fearful of the press."

None of the reporters mentioned senatorial staffs in their initial explanations of Senate coverage, but when asked about it, all agreed that staffs were a key factor in reporting the Senate. They said staffs were consulted by reporters far more frequently than senators themselves and that the more persons on the staff, the more areas a senator could specialize in.

Much more important than staff size was staff quality, the reporters felt. A strong staff could make the difference in legislative effec-

tiveness and visibility. In addition, they reported that some senators were particularly adept at using *committee* staffs for personal aggrandizement.

Press releases were in evidence everywhere in the Senate Press Gallery—on bulletin boards, the reporters' cluttered desks and in the hands of some. All the correspondents agreed that the highly visible senators churned out reams of paper, but they insisted this alone did very little to affect coverage. They saw press release volume as a function of greater activity—"aggressiveness" was a frequent term used. Rarely do press releases become news stories in themselves, according to the correspondents, but they were viewed as important for background, as explanations of bills and as general reference matter. A UPI correspondent noted that a senator's floor activity was likelier to make news if he also issued a supplementary press release about it. A veteran AP reporter said, however, "It's an inevitable fact of life, the way we operate with limited staff. . . , that the more speeches, press releases and other activities a senator turns out, the more coverage we give him."

The reporters found plausible the relationship between state size and visibility. Senators from big states have more "clout" and often have presidential aspirations, they said. One of them noted that big-state senators approach the press differently than small-state senators. He said big-state senators see the media as a key to their reelection; they cannot possibly shake hands with everybody the way the small-state people can.

All the reporters interviewed saw staff quality, committee work, committee chairmanships and what one of them termed "meaningful activity on issues" as major determinants of media coverage. A young UPI reporter said it was a simple matter of the "doers and the non-doers," adding, "I honestly don't know what some senators do here!"

Implications

Study of mass media coverage of U.S. senators during four Congresses in the last quarter-century suggests that being high in the Senate opportunity structure can, indeed, provide a base from which to attract national media exposure, especially for Republicans. But the predictive power of the institutional sources of Senate

power suggested by Matthews and others apparently shifts from Congress to Congress, and the forces of events and individual senatorial activity are more powerful in predicting press coverage.

The "new breed" of publicity-minded senators, whom Polsby sees as commanding a power base through national constituencies created in part by media coverage appears to be no recent phenomenon. They were just as evident—and perhaps more so—in the 83rd Congress as in the 93rd.

This work suggests that journalistic values of immediacy, conflict, event-oriented activity and personality-based action are much more predictive of news coverage of the most powerful legislative body in the land than are the trappings of institutional power within the U.S. Senate. Positions of power obviously count in making news, but the push and pull of events and the journalists' conceptions of news are more important, especially for Democrats.

In addition, it is doubtful that the Senate leadership can substantially increase its already considerable leverage on press coverage through development of a central staff devoted to press relations, as the U.S. Commission on the Operation of the Senate recommended. The lure of individual senatorial activity, with its potential for appealing to traditional news values of conflict and immediacy, is just too great. When the regularity and balance of Senate news improves, it will be the partnership of individual senators and reporters that will do it.

NOTES

1. Charles Bosley, "Senate Communications with the Public," in Commission on the Operation of the Senate, *Senate Communications with the Public: A Compilation of Papers* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 3. See also William I. Hill, "Congressmen Flunk Reporters on Coverage of 94th Congress," *Editor & Publisher* (December 18, 1976), p. 9, in which Hill reports that an overwhelming majority of congressmen agree that the press fails to report Congress adequately.

2. For an excellent discussion of the diffuse, fluctuating citizen support for Congress, see Leroy N. Rieselbach, *Congressional Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), pp. 221-24. Rieselbach concludes that public support for Congress is "well within acceptable limits."

3. Leroy N. Rieselbach, *Congressional Reform in the Seventies* (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1977), p. 85.

4. Commission on the Operation of the Senate, *Toward a Modern Senate: Final Report of the Commission on the Operation of the Senate* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 65-73.

5. Nelson W. Polsby, *Congress and the Presidency* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976), pp. 100-1.

6. Michael J. Robinson, "A Twentieth-Century Medium in a Nineteenth-Century Legislature: The Effects of Television on the American Congress," in Norman J. Ornstein (ed.), *Congress in Change: Evolution & Reform* (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1975), p. 254.

7. Robert O. Blanchard, "A Profile of Congressional Correspondents," in Commission on the Operation of the Senate, *supra*, n. 1, p. 73.

8. *Loc. cit.*

9. Nelson Polsby, "Congress, Publicity and Public Policy," in Robert O. Blanchard (ed.), *Congress and the News Media* (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1974), pp. 131-34.

10. Donald R. Matthews, *U.S. Senators and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960). All page references are for the Vintage Books paperback edition.

11. *Congress and the Presidency*, p. 92.

12. Randall B. Ripley, *Power in the Senate* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1969), p. 229.

13. *Congressional Politics*, p. 163.

14. *Congress and the Presidency*, p. 103.

15. "A Profile of Congressional Correspondents," p. 64.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

17. Susan Hielmann Miller, "Reporters and Congressmen: Living in Symbiosis," *Journalism Monographs* No. 53, January 1978.

18. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 215-17.

20. David H. Weaver, G. Cleveland Wilhoit, Sharon Dunwoody and Paul Hagner, "Senatorial News Coverage: Agenda-Setting for Mass and Elite Media in the U.S.," in *Senate Communication with the Public: A Compilation of Papers* (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1977) pp. 41-62.

21. Interviews conducted by G. Cleveland Wilhoit with Donald M. Rothberg, Joseph W. Hall, Jr., and Lawrence Knutson of the Associated Press Senate Bureau, Washington, D. C., Feb. 26, 1976.

22. Delmer D. Dunn, *Public Officials and the Press* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969), pp. 134-43.

23. Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973), p. 104.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

25. *Inside Congress*, 2nd Ed. (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1979), p. 123.

26. Matthews, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 215-17.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Interviews conducted by Cleve Wilhoit with Donald M. Rothberg, Joseph W. Hall, Jr., and Lawrence Knutson of the Associated Press Senate Bureau, and William Vance of the Knight News Service, Washington, D. C., February 26, 1976; and with Saul Friedman, National Press Building, October 21. 1976. Interviews conducted by Cleve Wilhoit and David Weaver with Donald May and Cheryl Arvidson of the United Press International Senate Bureau, Washington, D. C., May 20, 1976, and Dunn, *op. cit.* and Sigal, *op. cit.*

30. Matthews, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-17.

31. Mary Russell, "The Press and the Committee System," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Jan. 1974), 411: 114-19.

32. Dunn, *op. cit.*; Sigal, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 127; and author interviews, *supra*, n. 29.

33. Polsby, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

35. Matthews, *ibid.*

36. The term "opportunity structure" was suggested to us by Professor Leroy Rieselbach in a personal communication. Seniority rankings were obtained from the *Congressional Directory*, 1954, pp. 190-92; the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1966, pp. 28-31; *Congressional Directory*, 1969, pp. 235-37; and *Congressional Directory*, 1973, pp. 241-43. Matthews, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-59, ranked committee desirability on an ordinal scale, ranging from "1" (Foreign Relations Committee) to "15" (District of Columbia Committee). The Aeronautics and Space Committee was created after Matthews' study and was assigned a rank of 4.5 on his advice. Some senators were on several committees and the fluctuations produced by the use of all the committee assignments tended to distort actual prestige ranking. Therefore, each senator's two highest prestige committee assignments were averaged. The scale is highly correlated with the composite committee desirability ranking presented in Rieselbach, *Congressional Politics*, p. 60 (Spearman's Rho = .82).

The number of committees and subcommittees a senator served on as chairman or ranking minority member was obtained from the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1954, pp. 18-20; the *Congressional Index* (New York: Commerce Clearing House, Inc., 1954), pp. 4001-4102; *Congressional Directory: 89th Congress, First Session* and *Congressional Directory: 89th Congress, Second Session*, pp. 289-95; and *Congressional Staff Directory*, 1969, pp. 141-60; 1970, pp. 169-86; 1973, pp. 185-206: and 1974, pp. 185-206.

The size of each senator's staff (except for the 83rd Congress, where it was not available) was determined by counting the number of persons listed for each senator in Charles B. Brownson, ed., *Congressional Staff Directory*, 1965, pp. 71-86, and the *Report of the Secretary of The Senate*, July 1-Dec. 31, 1969, pp. 23-75; July 1-Dec. 31, 1970, pp. 24-81; July 1-Dec. 31, 1973, pp. 30-92; and July 1-Dec. 31, 1974, pp. 91-139. If a discrepancy existed in the number of persons from one Congressional year to the next, the larger number was used.

37. Herbert B. Asher, "The Changing Status of the Freshman Representative," p. 238, n. 21. In addition to using number of entries in the *Congressional Record* as a measure of activity, we also used the number of bills introduced by each senator. In every Congress, for each party considered separately and for all senators considered together, number of bills introduced was a weaker predictor of news media visibility than number of entries in the *Congressional Record*. Therefore, the analyses with number of bills as an activity measure are not presented here.

38. Two measures of Senate activity were taken from the *Congressional Record Index* for the 83rd Congress. The first, or total, measure included all citations appearing in the Record under each senator's name. The second measure controlled for Record "padding" by deleting all activity outside the Senate from the total number of citations under each senator's name. (These items included outside addresses, articles, newspaper stories and editorials, and statements entered into the Record.) Thus, this second measure of *internal* Senate activity included only amendments, bills and joint resolutions, motions and resolutions, petitions and papers, and remarks made by each Senator. The Pearson r between the total measure of activity and the internal measure was .99, strongly suggesting that padding of the *Congressional Record* is proportional to the number of more substantive entries in the Record for each Senator.

39. Six "constructed months" (six first weeks, six second weeks, six third weeks and six fourth weeks) were drawn at random for each of the three news magazines (*Time, Newsweek* and *U.S. News and World Report*) to obtain a sample of each magazine accounting for time and content variations in news flow. A total of 24 issues of each magazine was scanned from cover to cover for references to U.S. senators, with only advertisements and letters to the editor omitted. The four Eastern "prestige" newspapers (the Washington *Post*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the New York *Times* and the Louisville *Courier-Journal*) were analyzed by Joseph W. Ward, "News Visibility of United States Senators in Four Prestige-Press Newspapers," M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1970. Ward included the four newspapers just mentioned because they were among 15 listed in "Nation's Editors Pick 15 'Superior' Papers," *Editor & Publisher* (April 12, 1960) p. 12. The editors were asked to list those American newspapers "most superior for news coverage, integrity and public service." The total sample for Ward's study consisted of issues of the four newspapers from eight "constructed weeks" (56 days or 224 issues) from the calendar year 1965. The six Western "prestige" newspapers (the Chicago *Tribune*, the Des Moines *Register*, the Kansas City *Star*, the Los Angeles *Times*, the Milwaukee *Journal* and the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*) were analyzed by Mary Ann Wood, "Visibility of U.S. Senators in Six Western Prestige Newspapers," M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1970. Like Ward, Wood included the six newspapers just mentioned because they were among 15 listed in the *Editor & Publisher* article on "superior" papers. The total sample for Wood's study consisted of issues of the six newspapers from eight "constructed weeks" (56 days or 336 issues) from the calendar year 1965. Whereas the analysis of news magazine visibility, *Reader's Guide* visibility and Public Affairs visibility covered the entire 1965-1966 period of the 89th Congress, the Eastern and Western prestige press studies dealt only with the first half (1965) of the 89th Congressional session. The 89th Congress has been described as

"slow moving," and with "little change, either politically, or organizationally," making it, in our view, a good bench mark for comparison of senatorial news coverage with the 91st and 93rd Congresses. See Riddick and Zweben, note 42, below.

40. For a general discussion of the theory, usefulness and dangers of causal analysis, see Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., *Causal Inferences in Nonexperimental Research* (New York: Norton Co., 1964). One of the most important assumptions of this model is that the flow of causation is recursive (one way).

41. *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1965), p. 69.

42. Structurally, the 89th Congress was relatively stable, with little or no change in organization or operation. See F. M. Riddick and Muray Zweben, "The Eighty-Ninth Congress: First Session," *Western Political Quarterly*, 19:554-57 (1966) and "The Eighty-Ninth Congress: Second Session," *Western Political Quarterly*, 20:175-90 (1967).

43. *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1969, p. 77.

44. *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1970, p. 73.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

46. *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1973, pp. 2-5.

47. Interviews conducted by Wilhoit with Donald M. Rothberg, Joseph W. Hall, Jr. and Lawrence Knutson of the Associated Press Senate Bureau, and William Vance of the Knight News Service, Washington, D.C., Feb. 26, 1976; and with Saul Friedman, National Press Building, Oct. 21, 1976. Interviews conducted by Wilhoit and Weaver with Donald May and Cheryl Arvidson of the United Press International Senate Bureau, Washington, D.C., May 20, 1976.